

# THE GREEN SCENE

A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



## CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMON HOUSEHOLD AND OFFICE PLANTS

A HOME GARDENER'S  
HANDBOOK





## INTRODUCTION TO THE GREEN SCENE

Numerous requests and questions about plant life from Washington area residents contributed to the creation of THE GREEN SCENE, a broad-based program designed to stimulate interest in and expand the awareness of the environment through gardening. Employing park lands as focal points, the program brings together National Park Service plant experts and gardeners, elementary school children, downtown shoppers, business men and women for a variety of denominations, workshops, and question and answer sessions.

In the fall of 1972, a GREEN SCENE plant extension service was established to operate as a diagnostic center where Washington residents can call or bring their plants which show signs of disease or improper growth and where they can receive prescribed remedies.

This booklet, in its second printing, is an outgrowth of THE GREEN SCENE services. It has been expanded to include twenty-four common house and office plants with advice on their general and specific care, as well as information on how to bring forth additional plants.

THE GREEN SCENE holds plant demonstration workshops weekly in downtown parks throughout the summer months in conjunction with the *Summer in the Parks* program. Gardeners are invited to bring their plants and questions to the parks or to call THE GREEN SCENE at 282-7080.

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National Capital Parks  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
Washington, D.C. 1973



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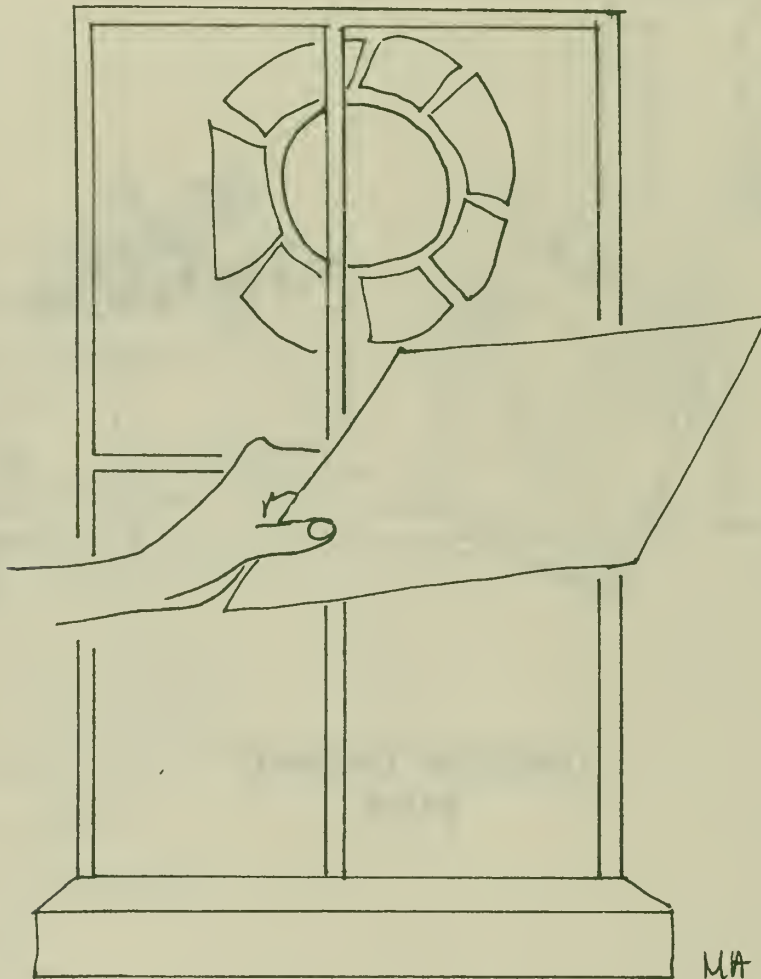
## GREEN THUMB TIPS



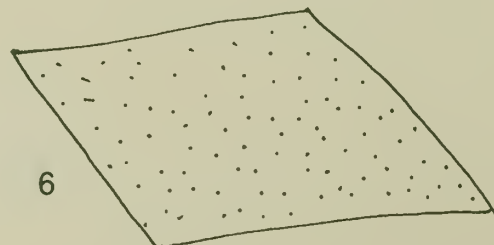
# HOW TO BUY A PLANT

## RULE OF THUMB: BE CHOOSEY WHEN YOU BUY PLANTS.

Look for plants that are healthy and insect free. It is best to avoid plants showing any of the following tell tale signs: spindly growth, yellowing leaves, unnatural blotches, speckles, wilted or artificially waxed leaves. When you check for signs of insects, look on the underside of foliage and in the joints of the leaves, stems and branches. If possible, buy plants during their growth season. Look for signs of leaf buds on foliage plants and flower buds on blooming ones.



SHADOW TEST





## LOCATION

### **RULE OF THUMB: CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLANT FOR THE GROWING CONDITIONS YOU HAVE TO OFFER.**

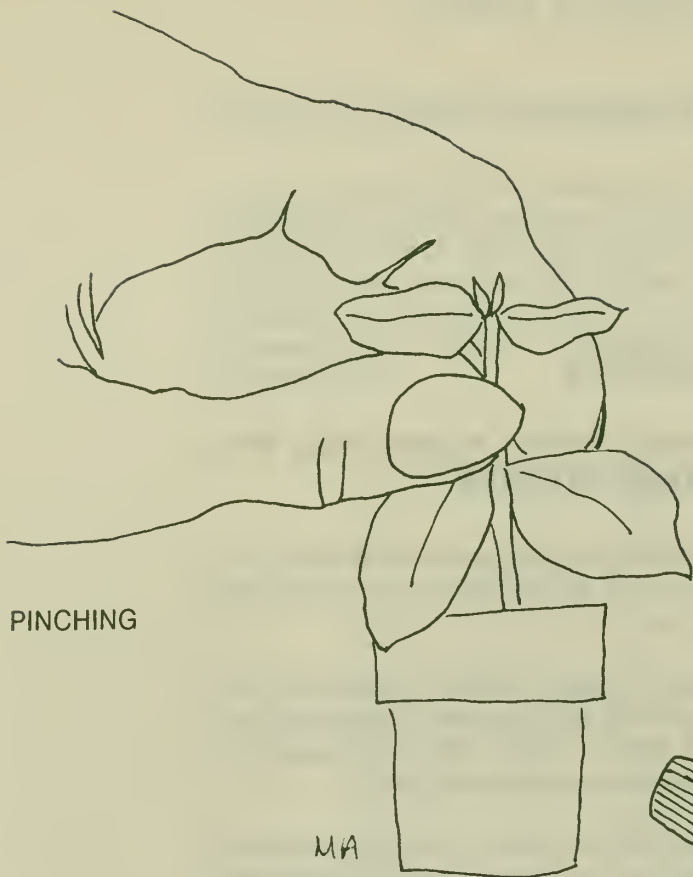
Particularly note the light and temperature your plant will receive. When you choose plants for your home or office, know what conditions you have and what plants will do well in that environment.

Light is the factor over which you have the least control. To determine the amount of light you have, use the shadow test. Hold a piece of paper up to the light and note the shadow it makes. A sharp shadow means that you have bright or good light, and a barely visible shadow means dim light.

If directions for your plant note direct or full sun, that means your plant will need sun for at least half of the daylight hours. Indirect or partial sun indicates that the sun light should be filtered through a curtain. Bright light means no direct sun light but that the room should be bright and well lighted. Shade loving plants should be kept in a well shaded part of your room.

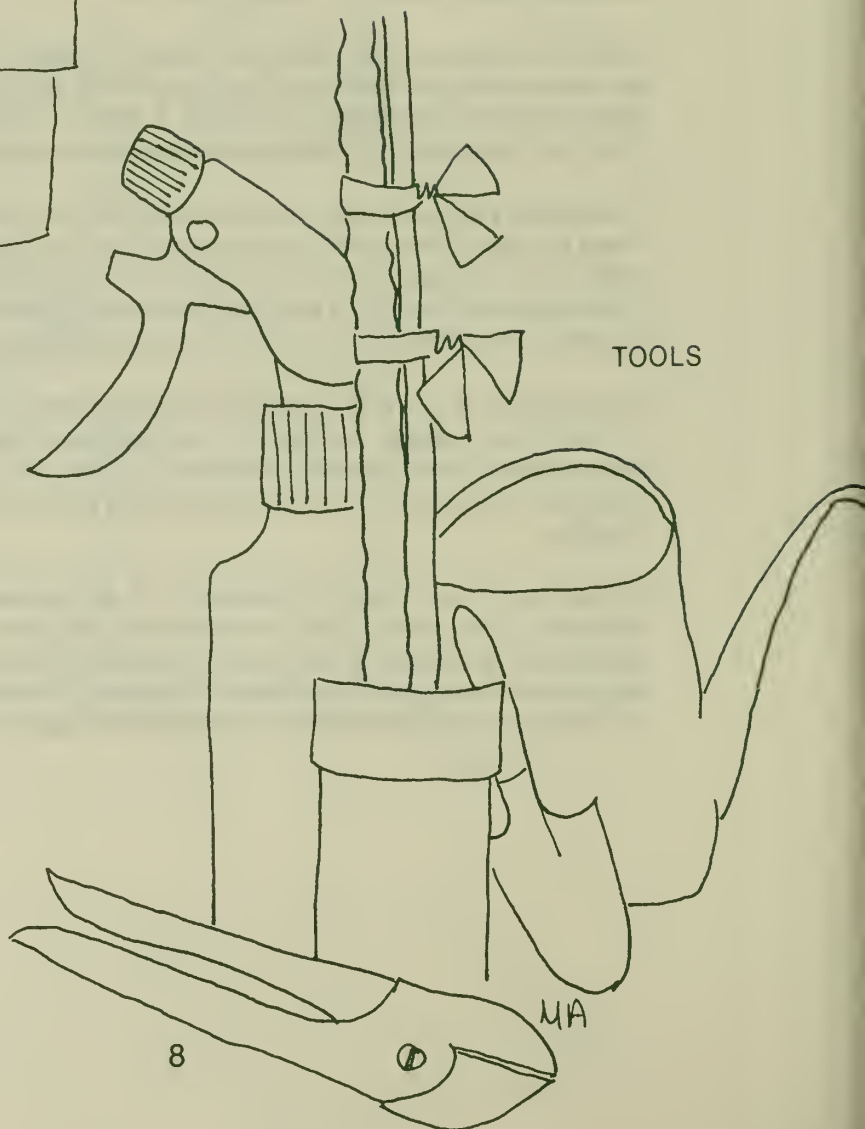
Temperature is a very important factor when dealing with plants. Most plants do not like sudden changes in temperature. Generally speaking plants do not want a temperature variable of more than a few degrees. Average household temperatures range between 60 and 75 degrees during the winter months.

House plants are usually grouped in three temperature categories, cool, moderate, and warm. Cool temperatures range from 50 to 60 degrees and should not go below 45 degrees. Moderate temperatures are from 60 to 70 degrees and should not be below 50 degrees. Warm temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees and should not go below 60 degrees.



PINCHING

MA



TOOLS

MA

## GROOMING AND TOOLS

**RULE OF THUMB: ESTABLISH A REGULAR WEEKLY OR MONTHLY ROUTINE FOR PLANT CARE. A GROOMED PLANT IS A HEALTHY PLANT.**

Remove all wilted or withering leaves, stems and flowers with a sharp scissors or knife. This is a good time to look at how the plant is growing. If it is getting leggy, pinch out new growth. This will force the plant to branch out and form a more compact shape.

When staking your plants do it early in their development. It is easier to keep the stem straight than to straighten a crooked one. Some plants need support for heavy flower heads or dense growth at the top of the stem. Thin bamboo stakes are useful and twistums or the paper coated wire found in boxes of plastic bags are excellent for staking and tying the plant. Climbing and trailing plants such as philodendron need to have a piece of bark or totem pole for climbing.

Once the plant has been groomed, place the pot in the sink and gently wash the leaves to remove dust and insects. Using a fork for a cultivator, loosen the surface soil in the pot.

Useful tools to have on hand for your indoor gardening are a trowel or large spoon and fork for working the soil. You will need pruning shears, a pair of sharp scissors or a sharp knife to cut off dead leaves and stems and do the pruning and grooming your plant requires. A watering can with a long thin spout is best for watering. However, you can use a pitcher or even a recycled bottle. A daily misting is beneficial to most plants as they thrive in a humid environment. Note there are exceptions such as cactus and African Violets. Convert an old cleaned out spray bottle into a mister.

## **POTS, TRAYS AND SAUCERS**

### **RULE OF THUMB: USE POTS WITH DRAINAGE HOLES.**

The unglazed clay pot exchanges the air in the soil readily. The clay evaporates the moisture through the walls of the pot and it is less likely to become water logged. In summer these pots dry out in the heat and breezy weather and must be watered more frequently.

Plastic pots require less frequent watering because the moisture evaporates from the soil surface only. It is important to provide a plant in this type of pot with well drained soil and a layer of drainage material in the bottom of the pot. The soil will get water logged from too frequent watering and the plant will suffer.

Decorative glazed pots can be used for planting if there are drainage holes in the bottom and the plant has well drained soil. If you have a favorite pot that does not provide adequate drainage there are several ways to make it a usable planter. It may be advisable to fit a properly drained container inside your pot. It might be possible to drill a hole in the bottom. If these suggestions will not work then place a thick layer of fine gravel in the bottom of the pot and then set the plant. Be very careful not to over water.

To protect your window sill or table, place pots in trays or saucers. These are available in plastic, rubber, glazed or unglazed clay. The unglazed clay must be waterproofed with a sheet of plastic or painted with waterproof paint.

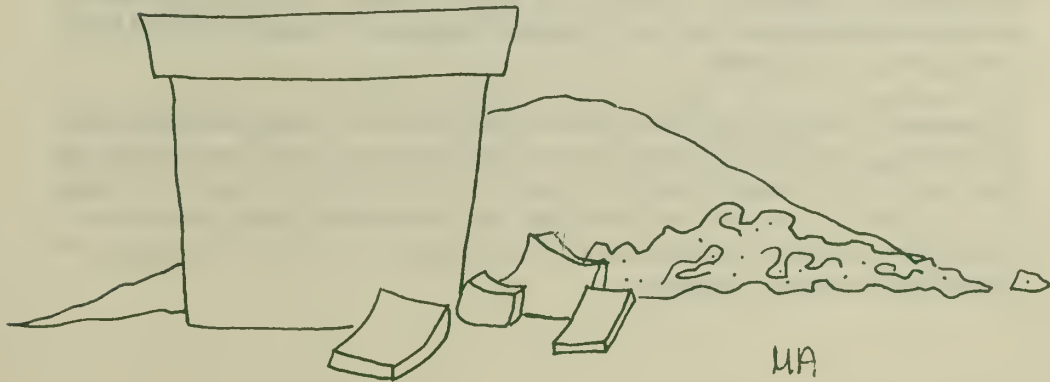
Preparing your pot for use is an important step. New clay pots should be soaked in clear water overnight. This allows the moisture to saturate the pot. A used clay pot should be soaked in ammonia or bleach and then thoroughly scrubbed with a stiff brush. It must be soaked in clear water to flush the toxic materials from the clay. Plastic pots should be scrubbed with a strong soap to kill any harmful insects or fungi.

## POTTING

**RULE OF THUMB: THE DIAMETER OF THE POT GENERALLY SHOULD BE ONE THIRD THE HEIGHT OF THE PLANT.**

Cover the drainage hole with a pebble or piece of broken pot to allow water to seep out but to keep the soil in place. Add a layer of gravel, crushed brick, or bits of broken clay pots for additional drainage. This is particularly important when you are using plastic pots. Cover the drainage material with a layer of soil. The depth of the layer will be determined by the size of the plant's root ball. The plant should sit in the pot so that when the pot is filled with soil the level is one inch below the rim. Set the plant gently but firmly in the pot and work the soil down into the roots. A sharp rap or two on the work surface will help to settle the soil. Do this a couple of times as you fill the pot with soil. Soak the freshly potted plant in water until soil is thoroughly moistened.

Occasionally plants may out-grow their pots. In general, repotting is done in the spring or the fall. Flowering plants are best repotted after the flowers have faded. As you prepare the plant for repotting, take a careful look at the roots. Check for insects, signs of root damage such as root rot. Remove anything that looks or feels unhealthy. There are some plants that are happy being pot-bound and some that do not bloom unless they are. Be sure to check a plant book for the likes and dislikes of your specific plant.





## SOILS

**RULE OF THUMB: CONSULT SECTION TWO OF THE GREEN SCENE BOOK FOR THE CORRECT SOIL MIXTURE FOR YOUR PLANTS.**

There are several readily available ingredients that are fairly common to all soil mixtures. However, the proportions used and those to include and leave out differ from plant to plant. These ingredients and their functions are:

**PEAT MOSS** This provides rich organic content for the soil. It also helps to prevent the soil from packing into a hard mass around the roots. Peat moss retains moisture and will prevent the soil mixture from drying out.

**POTTING SOIL OR GARDEN LOAM** This is the dense, black soil available in variety and plant stores. Used alone it is too rich, dense and heavy for most plants but provides body and nutrients for many plant varieties.

**COARSE SAND, PERLITE OR VERMICULITE** Any of these organic materials will loosen your soil mixture so that air and water are readily available to the roots. Coarse sand is preferred by some people especially in mixtures for cacti and succulents. Perlite, a white volcanic substance will not pack or soak up moisture but it keeps the soil porous. Vermiculite, an expanded mica, does soak up and retain moisture.

**ACTIVATED CHARCOAL AND BONE MEAL** These are extra ingredients and are not mandatory in a soil mixture. They help in keeping the soil fresh and promote root growth.

If obtained, pre-packaged, in a plant or variety store, the above ingredients have the advantage of being sterilized. This will insure that there will be no harmful fungi or pests in the soil. If you wish to sterilize your own soil, place it in a shallow baking pan and add one cup of water for each gallon of soil. Bake it in the oven at 180 degrees for 45 minutes. The soil must be cooled for at least 24 hours before using.

## **WATERING**

**RULE OF THUMB: DO NOT WATER TOO MUCH. MORE PLANTS DIE OF OVER WATERING THAN FROM ANY OTHER CAUSE.**

Always water your plants in the morning with room temperature water. Plants take in moisture and minerals which are most useful in combination with light energy. Know the needs of your plant and its environmental conditions. Factors such as humidity, sun light, seasonal variations and type of pot used must influence your decision concerning the amount of the water to give your plant. Here are some basic guide lines. When the plant is growing new leaves or producing flowers, it needs more water than during it's resting period. A cool environment requires less water than a hot dry one. Plants with hairy, thorny or waxy leaves need less water than the thin leaved varieties. Plants are specially adapted to meet specific needs. Inform yourself of the needs and adaptations of your individual plants.

There are several ways of watering your plants. The basic thing to remember about watering is to wet the soil in the pot until the excess drains off. One way of being sure the soil is thoroughly wet is to soak the pot in a bucket of tepid water for half an hour, remove the pot and drain. If you prefer to water from the top pour the water slowly on to the soil, fill the pot up to the top with water and allow it to absorb it until excess drains from the hole in the bottom.

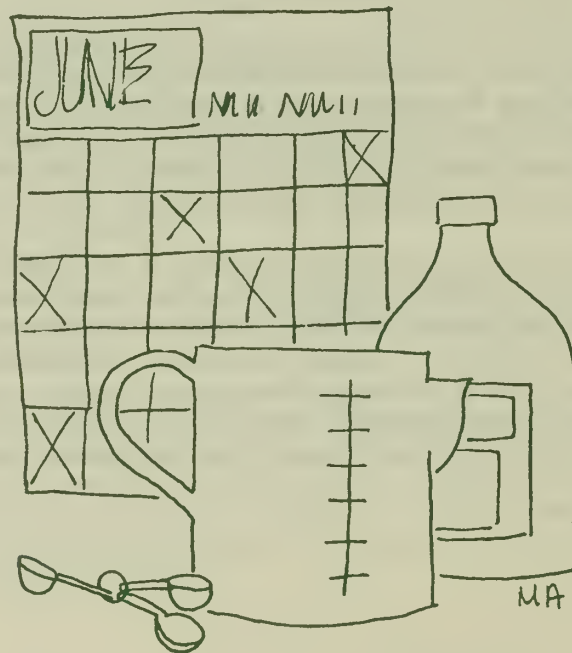
All pots should have a layer of drainage material in the bottom to keep the plant from getting root rot from soggy soil. The plastic pot does not allow the moisture to evaporate through the walls; do not be too generous. This can result in too much water which cloggs the soil and cuts down on the supply of air to the roots. There is the danger that the water does not penetrate the root ball, particularly after repotting. Use a knitting needle or other sharp implement to poke a few holes in the soil ball to channel the water to the roots.



## HUMIDITY

**RULE OF THUMB: MOST PLANTS LIKE HIGH HUMIDITY AND WILL BENEFIT FROM A DAILY MISTING. THIS DOES NOT REPLACE WATERING.**

Creating a humid environment for your plants can be achieved in several ways. Locate the plants in the area of your house where the humidity is high, such as the bathroom. Placing a collection of plants in a glass baking dish filled with pebbles that are kept partially covered with water is helpful in making a more humid atmosphere around the plants. Cluster your plants together and they will benefit from the moisture each gives off. Misting the foliage daily is beneficial to practically all houseplants except African Violets, Cacti and some Succulents. There are several misters or plant foggers available at plant and variety stores but a recycled spray bottle works just as well.



FERTILIZING

## **FERTILIZING**

**RULE OF THUMB: ESTABLISH A REGULAR ROUTINE FOR FEEDING YOUR PLANTS AND DO NOT FERTILIZE YOUR PLANTS WHEN THE SOIL IS DRY.**

A quick uptake of the fertilizer solution when the soil is dry causes burned roots and leaf edges.

When plants are actively growing (usually between March and October), they should be fertilized every four to six weeks. Do not fertilize when the plant is not producing new buds and leaves because it is resting.

Flowering plants will need more fertilizer. When the plant has set flower buds, fertilize every two weeks while the plant is in bloom. After the flowers have faded, remove the flower stalks and stop feeding the plant for a month to six weeks. This will give the plant a chance to rest.

There are a variety of plant foods available at plant and garden supply stores and variety stores. Fish mulshion is a safe organic plant food that most plants respond well to. If you prefer to use a chemical fertilizer follow the directions exactly. It is better to feed too little than too much. Too rich a diet can surely kill your plant.

## NOTES:

# PLANTS

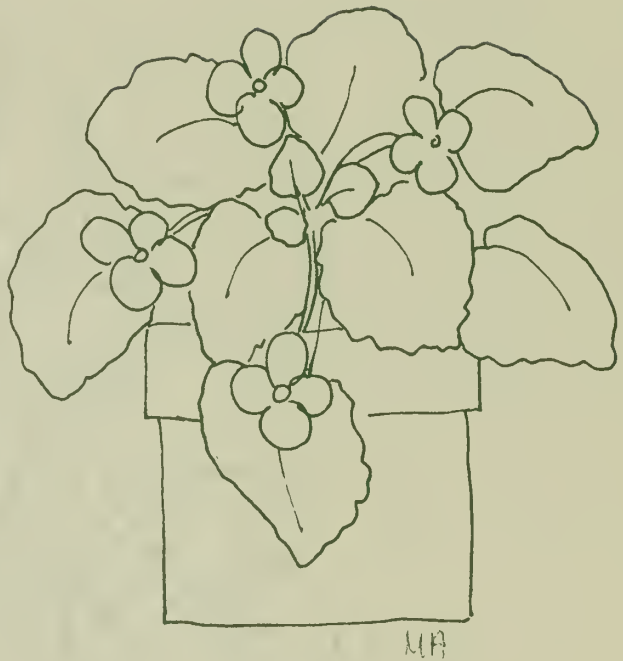


# AFRICAN VIOLET

*The African violet, a longtime favorite house-plant, does insist on more care and attention, but its beautiful blossoms make the effort worthwhile.*

## TEMPERATURE

African violets are more contented and grow best within a temperature range of 65 to 80 degrees. Be careful that your plants are not in an open window or a draft.



**AFRICAN VIOLET**  
*Saintpaulia ionantha*

## **LIGHT#SUN**

The African violet enjoys a place in an east or west window. Direct sun is too strong, unless filtered through a curtain. Excess sun will cause spotting and loss of color and too little light causes elongated stems and no blooms.

## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

African violets should be watered from the saucer underneath in the morning with *lukewarm* water. Water when the soil begins to dry out. Do not keep it “soggy”. If the air is dry in your home, place the potted plant in a tray of moistened pebbles.

## **SOIL**

The soil should be porous for good drainage and should contain ample organic matter such as compost or peat moss. Commercial African violet soil mixture is specially prepared for these plants, however, add sand or perlite to insure adequate drainage. A plastic pot is less likely to cause the lower leaves to rot where they touch the pot.

## **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Leaf cuttings placed in water, sand or a commercial rooting medium will form roots in about two weeks. New plants will form in six weeks to three months depending on the variety.

## **(FALSE) ARALIA**

A plant of grace and elegance with narrow, ribbon-like, notched leaves of dark green, usually born on slender, single stems. The Aralia is attractive if two or three plants are planted together in one pot. It grows very quickly, so prune the stem tips from time to time to prevent the foliage from thinning at the bottom.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The Aralia is tolerant of warm temperatures if there is plenty of humidity.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

The plant likes a semi-sunny to semi-shady window, an east or west window is ideal.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Keep the soil damp but not soggy. The False Aralia likes a humid atmosphere. Place your plant on a pebble tray and mist the foliage daily.

### **SOIL**

The soil should be equal parts loam, sand, and peat moss.

### **SPECIAL CARE**

You can rejuvenate leggy plants by drastically cutting the stems back to four to six inches from the pot. Do this in the spring and leave the plant in a sheltered location, being sure to fertilize and water frequently.





**FALSE ARALIA**  
*Dizygotheca elegantissima*



**ASPARAGUS FERN**  
*Asparagus sprengeri*

## **ASPARAGUS FERN - EMERALD FEATHER**

The Bright feathery green of this delightful plant is best displayed in a hanging container. The long branches drape gracefully and are studded with tiny white flowers that ripen into red-orange berries.

### **TEMPERATURE**

Asparagus Fern is not fussy about temperatures, but prefers a range of 60 degrees to 68 degrees.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

The bright filtered sun of an east or west window is a good location for this plant.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Soak the soil in the pot thoroughly and allow it to become dry to the touch before re-watering.

### **SOIL**

A well drained potting soil or a mixture of equal parts of loam, peat moss, sand or perlite.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Allow the berries to ripen and when dry sow the seeds they contain. Asparagus Fern can usually be grown from seed quite well.

## AVOCADO

The Avocado comes easily from seed and is grown for its ornamental foliage. It makes a nice tree for your indoor garden. Allow the plant to reach the desired height and then begin regular pinching to force branching and encourage bushy growth.



**AVOCADO**  
*Persea americana*

## **TEMPERATURE**

Temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees suit the Avocado well.

## **LIGHT#SUN**

Keep your Avocado in bright light but protected from direct sun. Avocados are easily sunburned, specially when they are first moved outside.

## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Use tepid water and keep the soil moist. Place the plant on a pebble tray to raise the humidity level around it. This plant likes a fair amount of humidity and benefits from regular misting. Any signs of browning or crispness at the tips and along the edges of the leaves means the plant needs more humidity.

## **SOIL**

Use a mixture consisting of equal parts of sand, loam and peat moss.

## **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS FROM SEED**

There are two ways of starting the seed. You can germinate it in water. Placing the pointed end up, stick three or four toothpicks around the middle of the seed to support it on the rim of the glass of water. Keep the water fresh. If you prefer to start the seed in soil, place it in a pot, pointed end up, allowing one third of the seed to stick out of the soil. Avocados come easily from seed but patience is important. Sometimes it takes two months for the seed to germinate.



## BOSTON FERN

Exaltant is a good adjective for this family of ferns that can fill a corner with rich green foliage. These ferns are excellent for hanging baskets. Initially the ferns may need a lot of attention until the right combination of environmental factors is achieved but the effort is well worth it. The leaflets grow on a midrib that is covered with fine brown hairs and vary from smooth-edged to feathery and even ruffled. A mature fern can have fronds ranging in length from two to three feet and two to three inches across.



**BOSTON FERN**  
*Nephrolepis exaltata*

## **TEMPERATURE**

With lots and lots of humidity, ferns will do well in house temperatures in the 60 to 70 degree range.

## **LIGHT#SUN**

Ferns need a location with good bright light but this means filtered sun-light. *Avoid direct sunlight.*

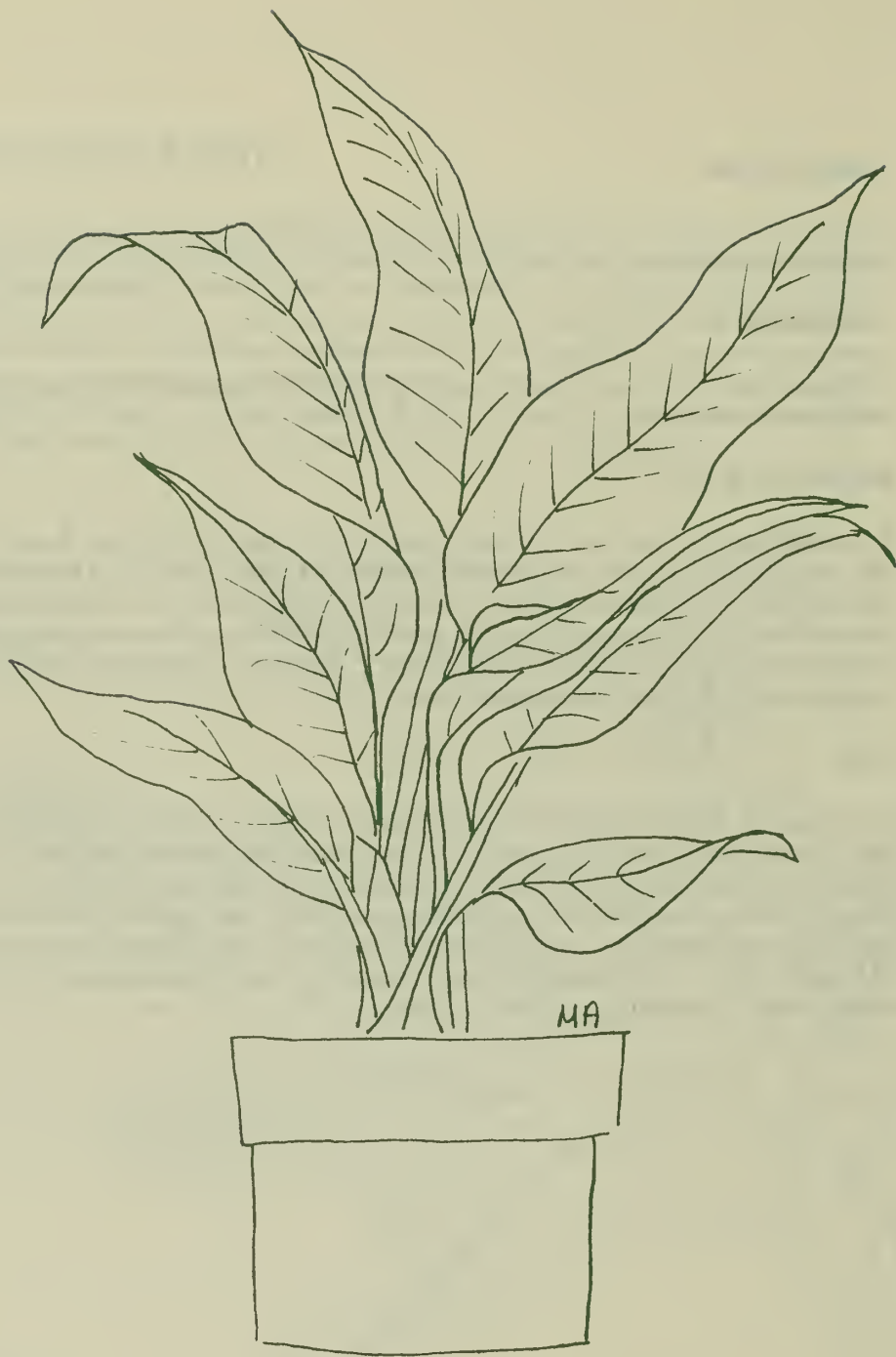
## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

It is essential that the roots of the ferns never dry out at any time. Soak the soil regularly. Clay pots and hanging baskets can be soaked in a bucket or the sink for half an hour and then drained. The soil should be checked daily to make sure that it is not drying out. Humidity is the most important ingredient to successful fern growing. Place pots of ferns on a pebble tray. Mist the foliage daily with room temperature water.

## **SOIL**

Ferns need a soil that is loose and easily penetrated by their dense root system. The soil mixture should be rich in peat moss and organic matter with a liberal amount of sand for drainage. A sprinkling of charcoal mixed in the soil helps to keep the soil from becoming sour from the frequent waterings. When potting ferns place a layer of bits of broken pots or gravel in the bottom of the pot. Ferns do not take kindly to having their roots tampered with, so be careful not to damage them when repotting.





**CHINESE EVERGREEN**  
*Aglaonema modestum*

## **CHINESE EVERGREEN**

This beautiful foliage plant has waxy dark green leaves. The leaves grow on a cane like stem and are oblong, tapering to a thin tip. Some of the varieties are variegated with splashes of creamy white or yellow. Under optimal conditions, it will produce a flower spike surrounded by a white spathe. The flower is similar to a calla lily. The great thing about this plant is that it will adapt to a variety of environments which makes it a good plant for a beginner or a difficult location.

### **TEMPERATURE**

A range of 60 to 70 degrees suits this plant well.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

A shady spot, an artificial light, or any other location will suit this plant. The Chinese Evergreen is an excellent plant for a north window.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

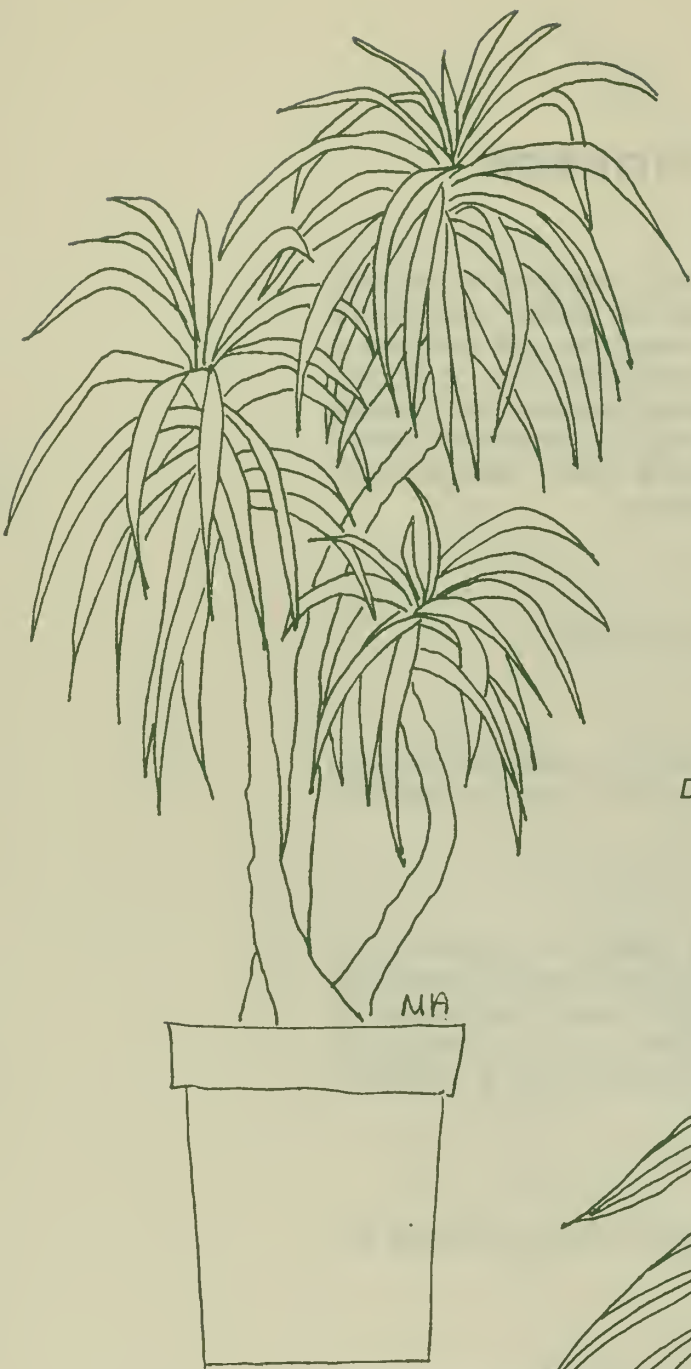
Keep the soil moist but not soggy. To avoid water logged soil, allow the surface soil to become dry to the touch before rewatering. The Chinese Evergreen can be grown in water. The roots are attractive so a clear glass container shows them off to best advantage. It is important to wash the leaves regularly to keep them dust free.

### **SOIL**

The soil should be equal parts of garden loam, peat moss and sand.

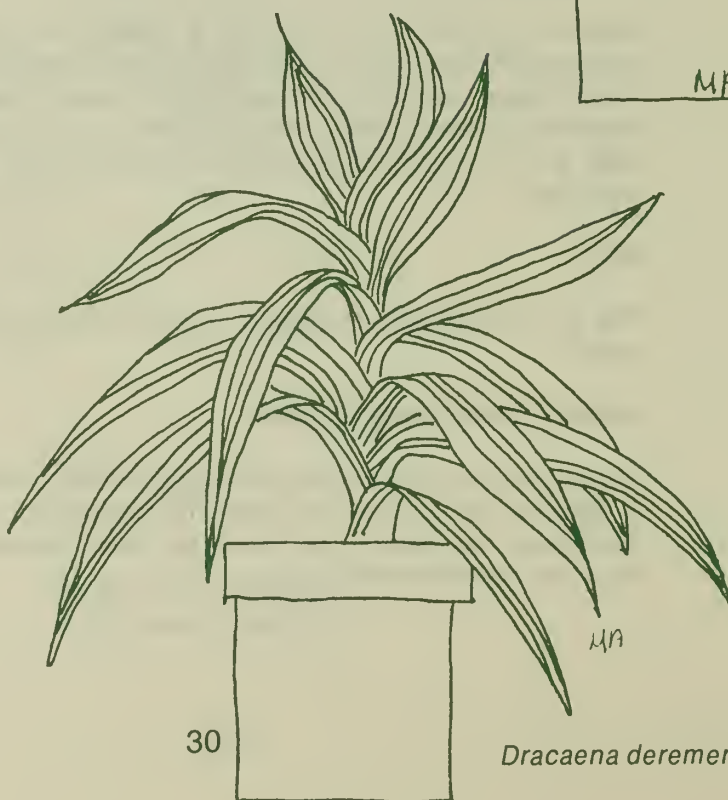
### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

This plant has a tendency to get leggy. To start a new plant make a diagonal cut two inches below the foliage and root in water. Additional new plants can be started from two-inch lengths of stem set in moist sand or soil.



*Dracaena marginata*

*Dracaena sanderiana*



*Dracaena deremensis* "Warneckei"

## DRACAENAS

**There are several varieties of dracaenas which vary in foliage color, variegation and size. Here are three that are commonly available.**

*Dracaena deremensis* "Warneckeii" is a good choice for a location without much light. The gray green foliage is striped with white and gray.

*Dracaena marginata* has clusters of narrow deep green leaves edged with red and gray stems strongly marked with leaf scars. This variety will reach a height of five or six feet.

*Dracaena sanderiana* resembles a corn plant in the brightness of the green and the size and shape of the leaves with the difference that the leaves are striped with white.

### TEMPERATURE

Moderate household temperatures in the 60 to 70 degree range suit these plants best. It is important to keep plants away from heating vents.

### LIGHT#SUN

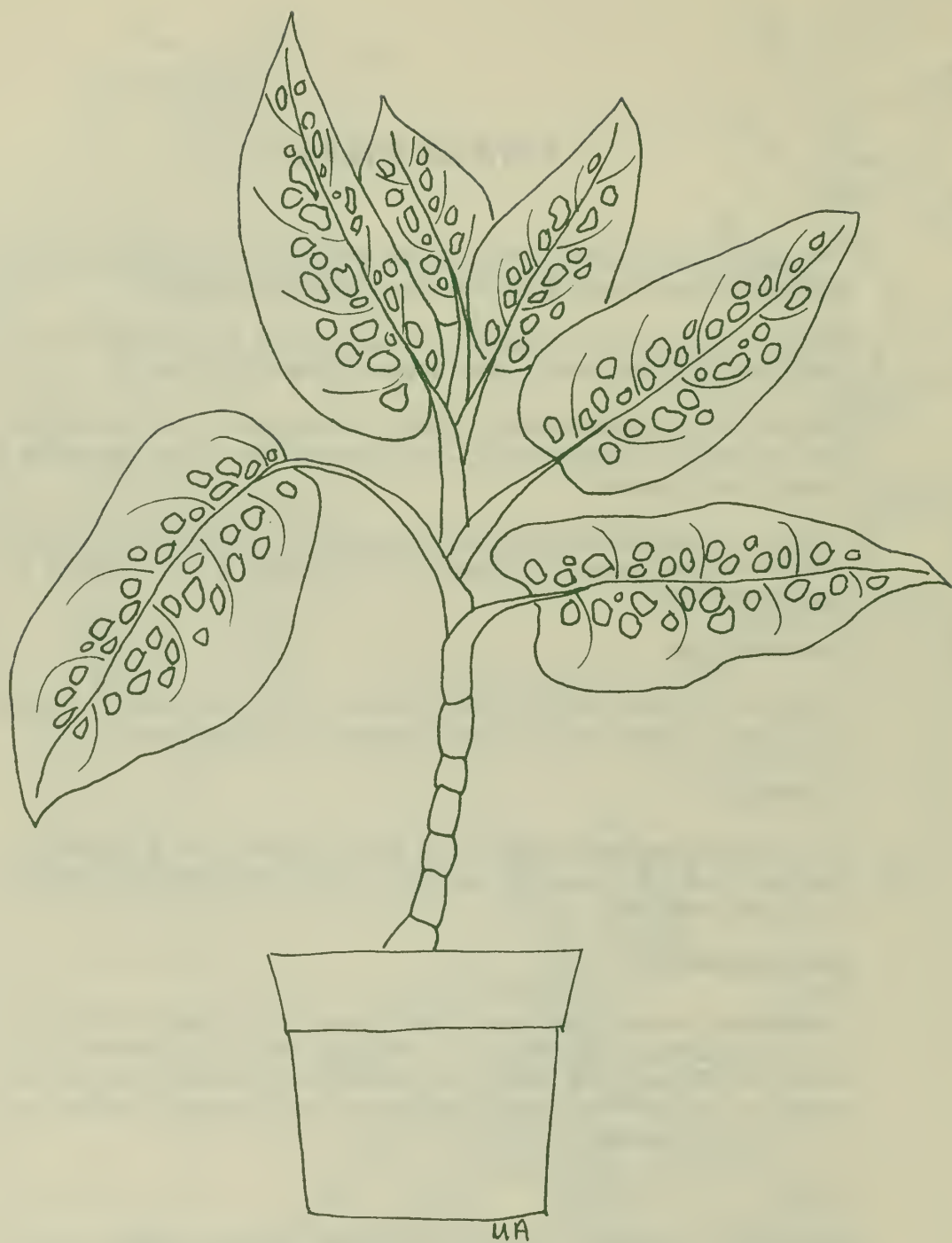
The marginata and sanderiana should get only filtered sun or bright light. The Warneckeii will fare well in a spot with very little light; it will flourish when more light is available.

### WATER#HUMIDITY

These plants all like soil that is kept evenly moist but not soggy. Soak the soil in the pot thoroughly and then rewater when the soil surface feels dry to the touch. Humidity is a must. Brown crispy leaf tips and margins mean too little moisture in the air. It is a good idea to place the dracaenas in pebble trays and mist the foliage daily.

### SOIL

Commercial potting soil is adequate but added drainage material such as sand or perlite is advisable.



**DUMB CANE**  
*Dieffenbachia maculata*



## **DUMB CANE**

The cool looking foliage of this plant is yellow-green, mottled with white. The leaves are pointed ovals that become quite large as the plant matures. The dieffenbachia is known as the "mother-in-law" plant or the dumb cane because when a piece of the stem is placed on the tongue it causes temporary numbness and loss of speech. **ALL JOKING ASIDE THIS PLANT IS POISONOUS.**

### **TEMPERATURE**

The dieffenbachia prefers warm temperatures and will tolerate hot dry places with added humidity.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

This plant does well in an east or west window where it can bask in the sun for a few hours.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

The soil should be allowed to dry out for a few days before rewatering. The plants indicate a need for water when the leaves show signs of dropping. Regular misting keeps the foliage dust free and luxuriant.

### **SOIL**

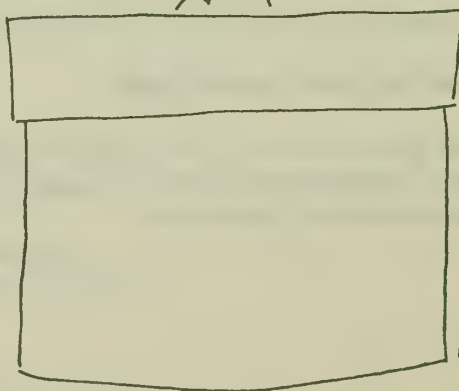
A porous soil of equal parts loam, peat moss, and sand is fine.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

If the plant is too tall and the stem is bare and unsightly, cut the top on a diagonal and root it in water. The old stem will probably sprout, so do not throw it out.

# GARDENIA

The gardenia is a handsome foliage plant with intensely fragrant blooms, but it has an extremely temperamental nature. It is a challenging plant to grow successfully indoors. The most frequently available varieties are *Gardenia radicans floraplana* a low spreading plant with small double flowers, and *Gardenia florida* which blooms in summer.



## GARDENIA

*Gardenia radicans floraplana*



## **TEMPERATURE**

The temperature must be kept above 65 degrees to maintain healthy foliage and flower buds. These plants hate drafts. Loss of flower buds is often due to sudden changes in temperature.

## **LIGHT#SUN**

The gardenia needs lots of light but avoid strong sun that might burn the leaves.

## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

The soil must be kept constantly moist without becoming soggy. Submerge the pot in a bucket of luke warm water and allow it to soak for half an hour or until the soil is moist on the surface. Do not allow the pot to sit in water as that will cause the roots to rot. Gardenias need very high humidity at all times. Place the pot in a tray of moistened pebbles. Mist the foliage daily with tepid water. Leaf or bud drops indicate the air is too dry.

## **SOIL**

Potting soil should be a mixture of equal parts peat moss, loam and well decayed manure with sand or perlite added for drainage.

## **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

The gardenia needs to have lots of pampering to encourage it to flower. It is necessary to provide plenty of light, a uniform temperature and moisture level, and high humidity. Loss of buds and blackening of the leaves and new growth results from a sharp change in temperature, insufficient light or humidity.



**GRAPE IVY**  
*Cissus rhombifolia*

## **GRAPE IVY**

Grape Ivy is a climber or trailer. The olive colored green leaves look a bit like those of holly without the stiffness or the sharp tips. The leaves form attractive groups of three and are accompanied by furry tendrils.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The plant is fairly tolerant of a wide temperature range. Increase the amount of humidity as the temperature goes up.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

Grape Ivy will do all right in low light and is often used in low light areas. But it flourishes with bright light or filtered sun light.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Soak the pot and soil thoroughly and then allow the soil to become dry to the touch before rewatering. Mist frequently and wash the foliage regularly to remove dust and restore the luster of the leaves.

### **SOIL**

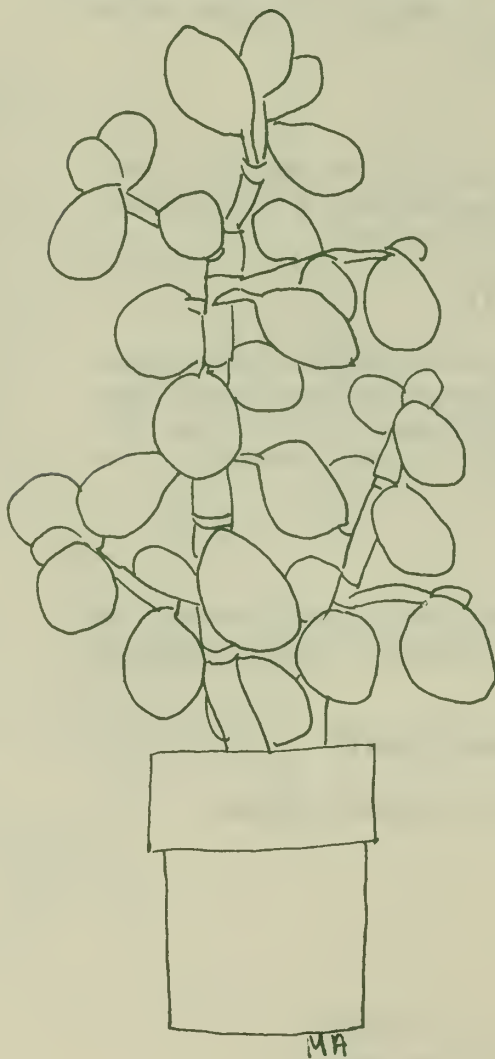
A potting soil that is rich in organic matter is the best. Be sure to add plenty of drainage material to the soil mixture.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Six inch cuttings will root slowly in water.

## JADE PLANT

The Jade Plant is a tough plant well suited to the hot dry conditions so prevalent in office and apartment buildings. The rounded leaves are in pairs on the branched tree-like stem. A plant that is six to eight years old will produce clusters of lacy looking star shaped flowers.



**JADE PLANT**  
*Crassula arborescens*

## **TEMPERATURE**

Temperatures ranging from 65 to 75 degrees are fine. Lower and higher temperatures will be tolerated.

## **LIGHT#SUN**

The Jade Plant will require full sun light with shade at midday if possible. A west or south window would be good locations. If you put the plant outside in the summer place it in a lightly shaded spot.

## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

The soil should remain dry for several days between waterings. The fleshy leaves soak up the soil water and store it for future use. Too much water will cause stem and root rot and certain death.

## **SOIL**

The Jade plant will do well in rich garden soil that has coarse sand or fine bits of broken pots added to it for drainage. Each year give the pot a top dressing of humus. A new pot will be necessary only after about three or four years.

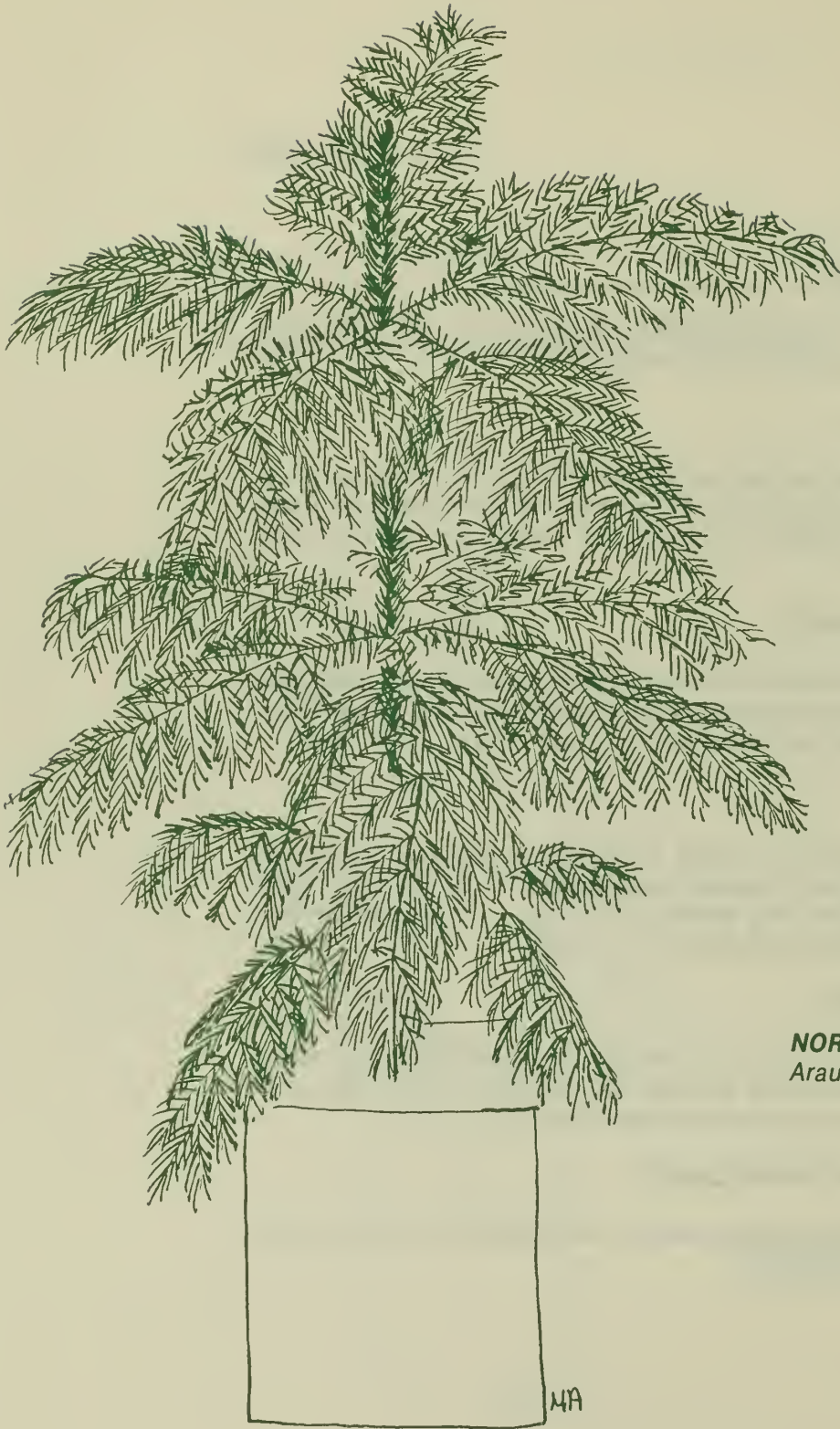
## **SPECIAL CARE**

The Jade Plant must be thoroughly pot bound to bloom. Once your plant approaches the right age let the pot cram itself with roots and then produce its delicate flowers.

## **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

A leaf or stem cutting placed in sandy, gritty soil will take root and form a new plant.





**NORFOLK ISLAND PINE**  
*Araucaria excelsa*



## **NORFOLK ISLAND PINE**

The delightful symmetry of this evergreen makes it a desirable house plant. The branches grow in teirs of six; each teir representing a year's growth. The bright green needles are soft and pleasant to touch.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The ideal temperature is between 50 and 60 degrees. High temperatures are tolerated when sufficient humidity is available.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

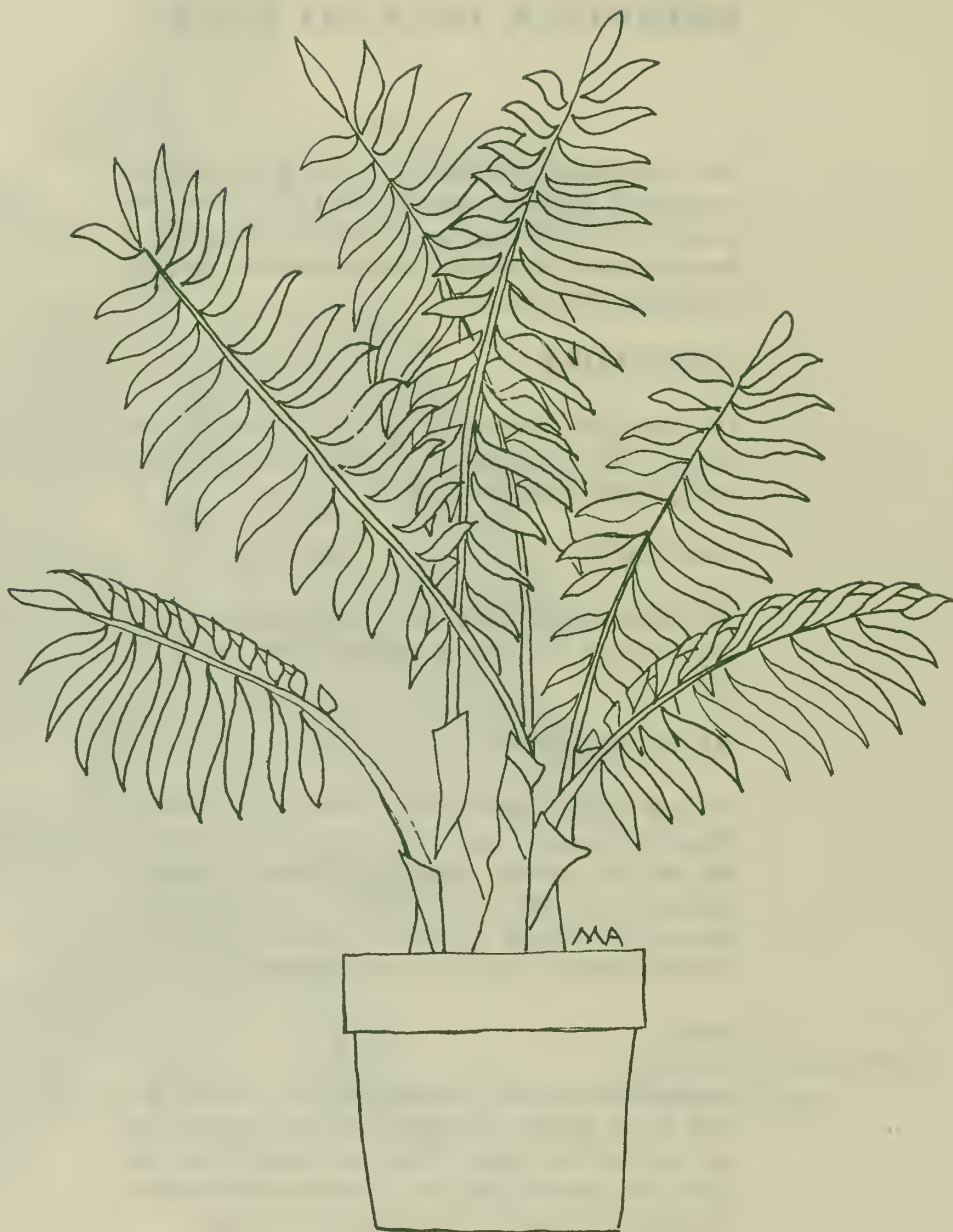
The filtered sun of an east or west window is best. Yellowing of the needles might mean too much sun.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Provide the plant with a well drained soil and pot. Water thoroughly and allow the soil surface to become dry before rewatering. Daily misting is necessary for the warmer temperatures of most houses and offices. A pebble tray will help to add more moisture to the air around the plant.

### **SOIL**

Garden loam mixed with equal parts of sand and peat moss makes a suitable potting mixture. Repot the Norfolk Island Pine only when it has become pot bound (the pot is crammed with roots). This would be about every two or three years.



**PARLOR PALM**  
*Chamaedora elegans*

## PARLOR PALM

The Palm trees are not the easiest plants to grow. However, once you have discovered their basic needs they are a delightful addition to your indoor garden. The palm pictured grows to about four feet tall. It is most attractive when two or three plants are grouped together in a pot. The long feathery fronds grow out of a single stem. Other varieties to try are *C. seifrizii*, *C. erumpens*, and *C. costaricana*.

### TEMPERATURE

The best growing temperatures for palms range between 60 and 75 degrees.

### LIGHT#SUN

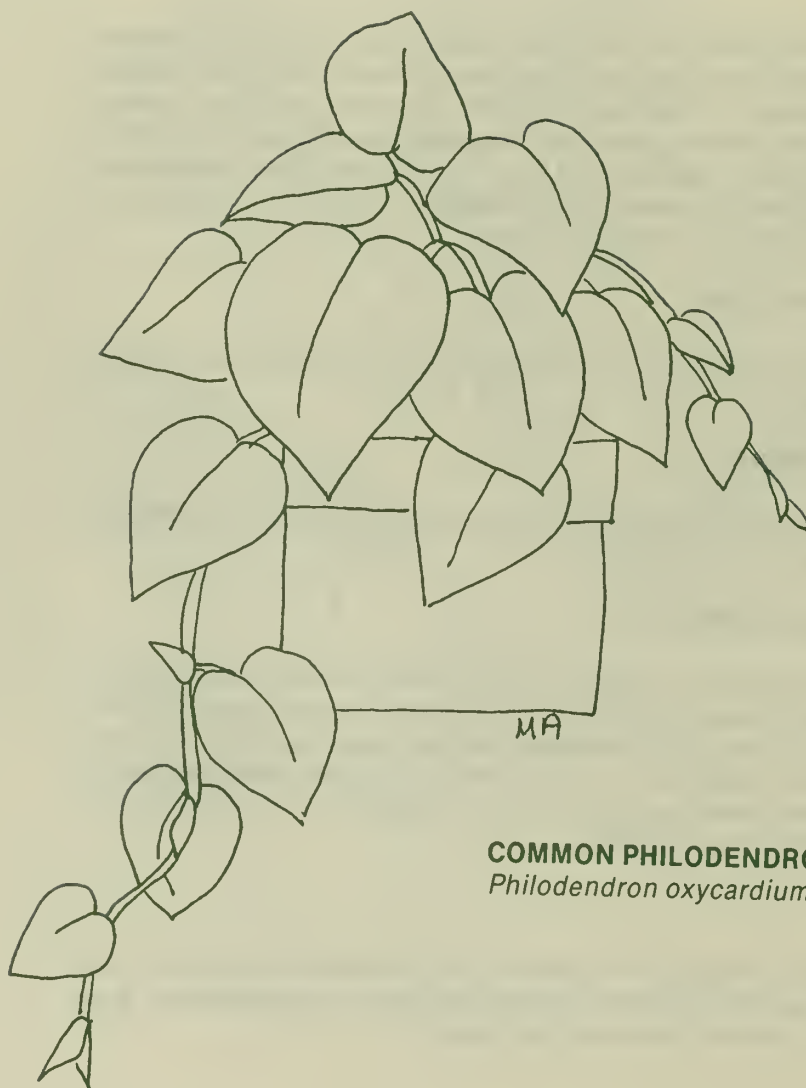
Palms are good plants for locations without much light. They do not like direct sun light.

### WATER#HUMIDITY

During the active growing season, between March and October, the palm needs moist soil but it will not tolerate soggy soil. In the winter months, allow the soil to dry on the surface before rewatering. If the foliage shows signs of browning and drying on the tips it needs more humidity. Misting regularly is recommended to keep the foliage healthy.

### SOIL

The Palm needs well drained soil of equal parts rich garden loam, peat moss and sand. It will need repotting only every two or three years. It prefers being a bit pot bound.



**COMMON PHILODENDRON**  
*Philodendron oxycardium*

## **PHILODENDRON**

By nature, the Philodendron is a climbing plant, but it also trails. It looks best on a bracket beside the window frame, and for good effect must be kept strongly pinched back so that the plant is full of bushy young growth and does not deteriorate into two or three string-like stems.

### **TEMPERATURE**

Normal house or office temperatures are fine.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

The Philodendron is quite hardy and robust and will grow almost anywhere. However, it will fare better in a well-lighted area.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

The plant should be kept evenly moist and never allowed to dry out. Be certain water does not remain in the saucer after watering. The foliage should be misted daily and the leaves cleaned of accumulated dust.

### **SOIL**

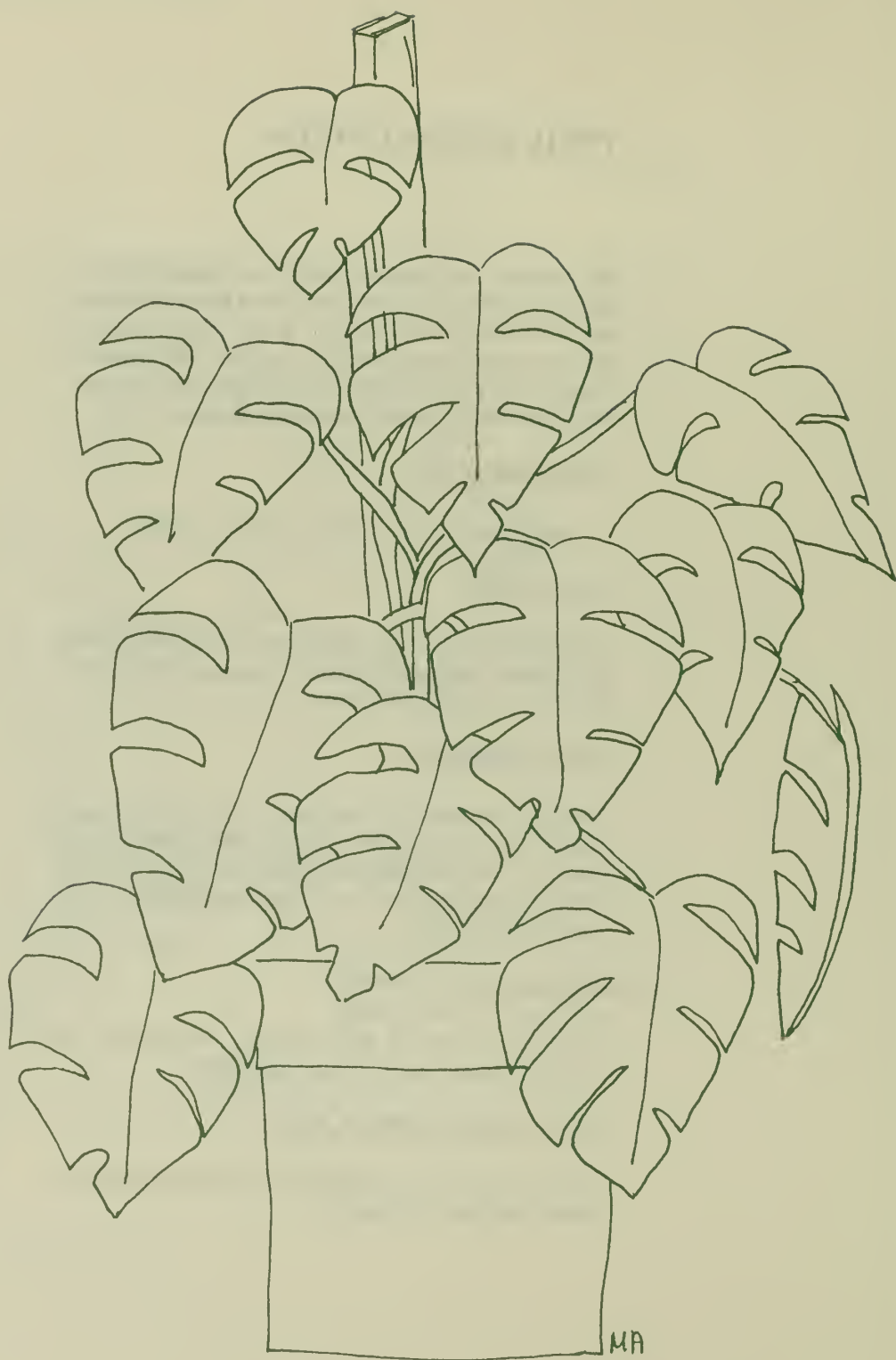
Potting soil mixed with perlite, vermiculite, or sand and peat moss is recommended.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Tip cuttings can be easily rooted in water and then potted in good potting soil.

**WINDOWLEAF PHILODRON**

*Philodendron pertusum* "Monstera deliciosa"





## **WINDOWLEAF PHILODENDRON**

This Philodendron has large heart shaped leaves that are slashed irregularly. It is an enthusiastic climber and needs a piece of bark or totem for support. The aerial roots can be inserted in the soil or encouraged to attach to the totem. Keep the growing tips pinched back so that the plant doesn't get leggy.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The Windowleaf prefers temperatures between 65 and 70 degrees.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

Bright light is best for this plant. However, avoid putting the plant in a location where the plant would get direct sun.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Soak the plant thoroughly and allow the soil surface to remain dry for a day or two before rewatering. Mist the foliage daily and wash the leaves weekly to remove dust.

### **SOIL**

A soil mixture of equal parts garden loam, peat moss, and sand is fine.

### **SPECIAL CARE**

There does not seem to be an explanation for why some leaves split and why some do not. Splitting seems to occur erratically.



**PURPLE PASSION PLANT - VELVET PLANT**  
*Gynura aurantica*

## **PURPLE PASSION PLANT - VELVET PLANT**

The strikingly rich royal purple coloring and velvety texture of the foliage and stems attract many growers. The green leaves and stems are covered with tiny purple hairs. The straggly growth habit is best kept in check by frequent pruning.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The Purple Passion plant likes temperatures in the 65 to 70 degree range.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

Direct or partial sun will promote the color.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

It is important that the velvet plant not dry out. Keep the soil evenly moist at all times. A humid atmosphere is important to keep the brilliant color. Mist the foliage frequently and place the pot in a tray of moistened pebbles to raise the humidity.

### **SOIL**

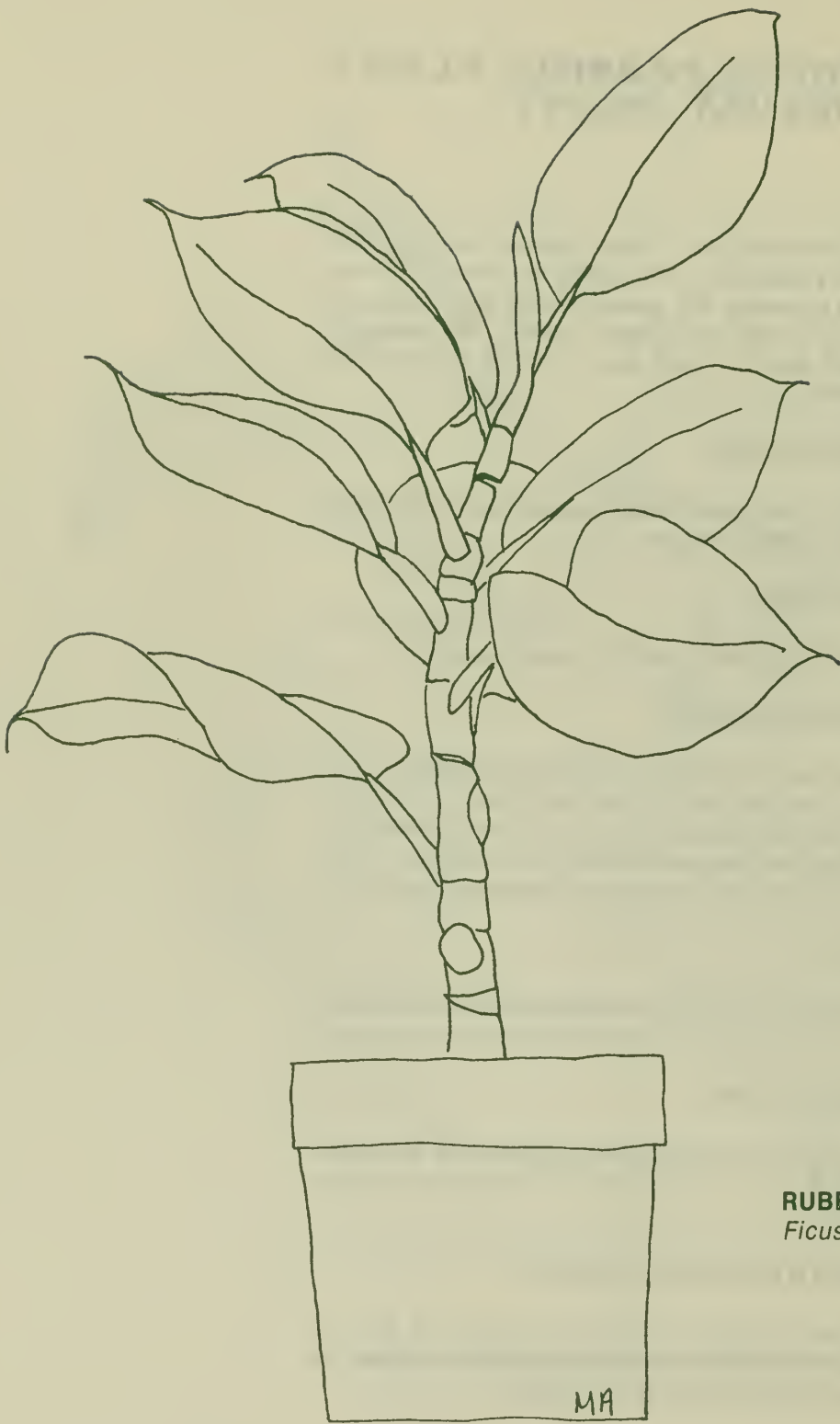
Use Potting soil of equal parts garden loam, peat moss and sand. This plant will also grow in water.

### **SPECIAL CARE**

Regularly pinching back the stems will force the plant to branch. This plant has a tendency to get leggy.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Set six inch stem cuttings in water. It is best to start new cuttings every six months in order to have an attractively shaped plant.



**RUBBER TREE PLANT**  
*Ficus elastica decora*

## **RUBBER TREE PLANT**

This house plant with dark green glossy leaves can grow to be four feet high with a little care and not too much water.

### **TEMPERATURE**

Due to its hardy nature, the plant does well in any normal household temperature.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

The plant will do well in almost any light, but a well-lighted area is best for the rich green foliage characteristic of the Rubber Tree Plant.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Water only when the soil is completely dry all through the pot. You should set the entire pot in a bucket when watering, so that moisture can penetrate the deepest roots. Clean the leaves every two weeks or so with a damp cloth. Do not artificially shine the leaves as this clogs the plant's pores and does not allow it to breathe!

### **SOIL**

Soil should be a well drained mixture of equal parts of sand, peat moss and garden loam. If pot is plastic or rubber be sure to provide plenty of drainage material in the bottom of the pot.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

This is usually done by professionals, however, you can try the air-layering process by following the details outlined in a gardening encyclopedia.



**SCHEFFLERA - UMBRELLA TREE**  
*Schefflera venulosa*



## **SCHEFFLERA - UMBRELLA TREE**

If you are looking for a tree for your indoor garden, a Schefflera is a good choice. It has handsome deep green leaves that radiate out from a long slender stalk rather like the ribs of an umbrella.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The Umbrella Tree does well in a room where the temperature ranges from 55 to 75 degrees.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

The Schefflera does not like direct sun light. It grows best in good light from a shaded window.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

When watering your Schefflera, soak the pot thoroughly and then allow the soil to dry before rewatering. The plant likes a humid atmosphere and responds well to daily misting with warm water. This is essential if the plant is in a room with forced hot air heat. This plant needs a pebble tray.

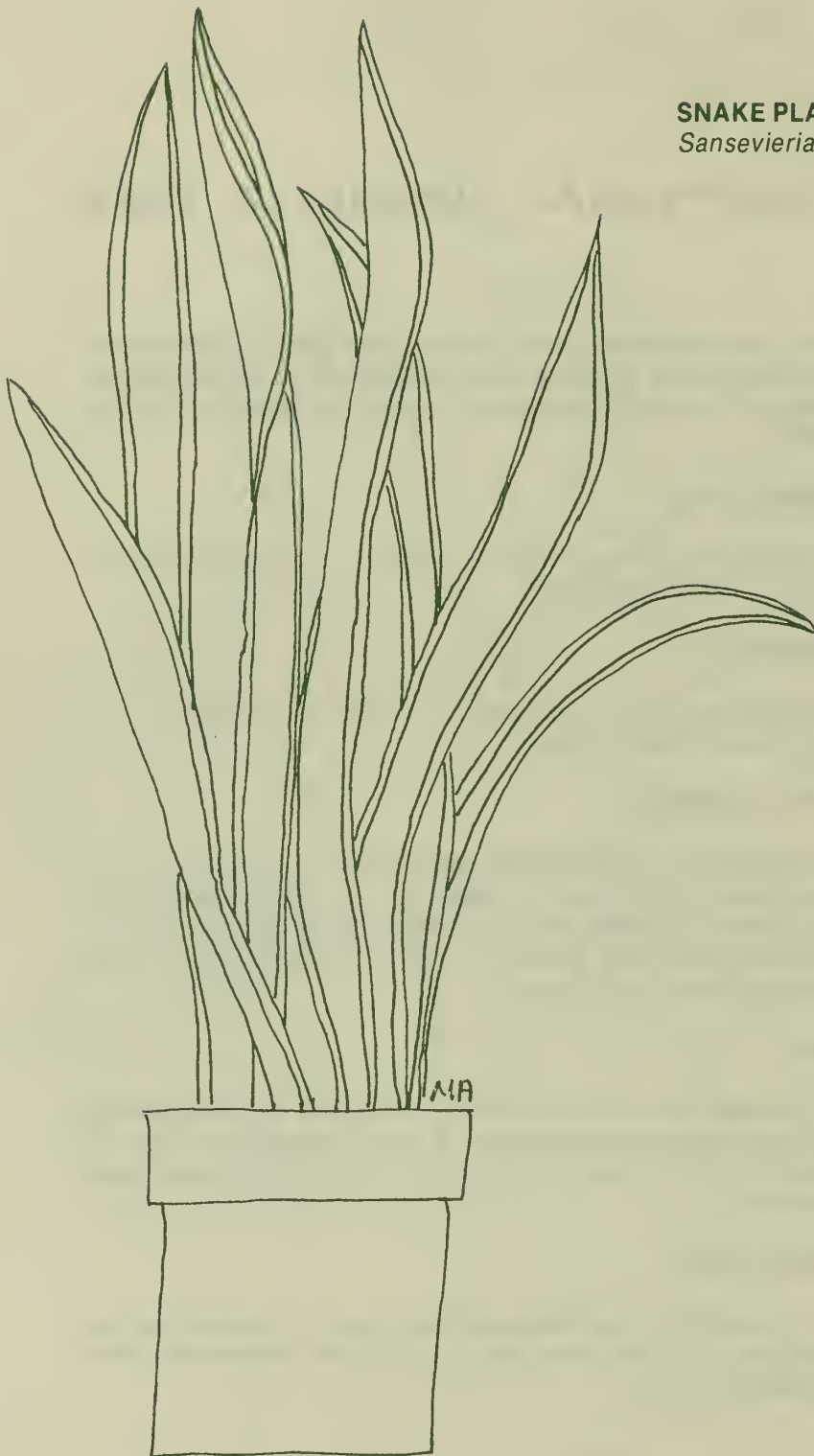
### **SOIL**

The soil mixture for the Umbrella Tree should be equal parts of peat moss, garden soil and sand. The pot should have a layer of gravel or bits of broken pots underneath the soil to insure good drainage.

### **SPECIAL CARE**

Weekly washing of the foliage will keep dust from building up and suffocating the plant. Poor drainage or too much water will cause the leaves to drop.

**SNAKE PLANT**  
*Sansevieria trifasciata*



# **SNAKE PLANT**

Seen in many homes and offices, this spikey, banded plant will take almost any abuse.

## **TEMPERATURE**

Normal household temperatures are best, *but* do not allow the plant to become suddenly chilled!

## **LIGHT#SUN**

The Snake.Plant is a good low light plant but needs sun in order to bloom.

## **WATER**

The plant likes the dryness of the home and should never be over-watered. The leaves should be cleaned with clear water every two weeks.

## **SOIL**

Garden loam, peat moss and sand mixed together provides the best soil for the Snake Plant.

## **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

There are three common varieties of the Snake Plant and they are distinguished by their coloring and shape. In order to maintain these distinctions, it is necessary that the cultivation of each variety remain distinct.

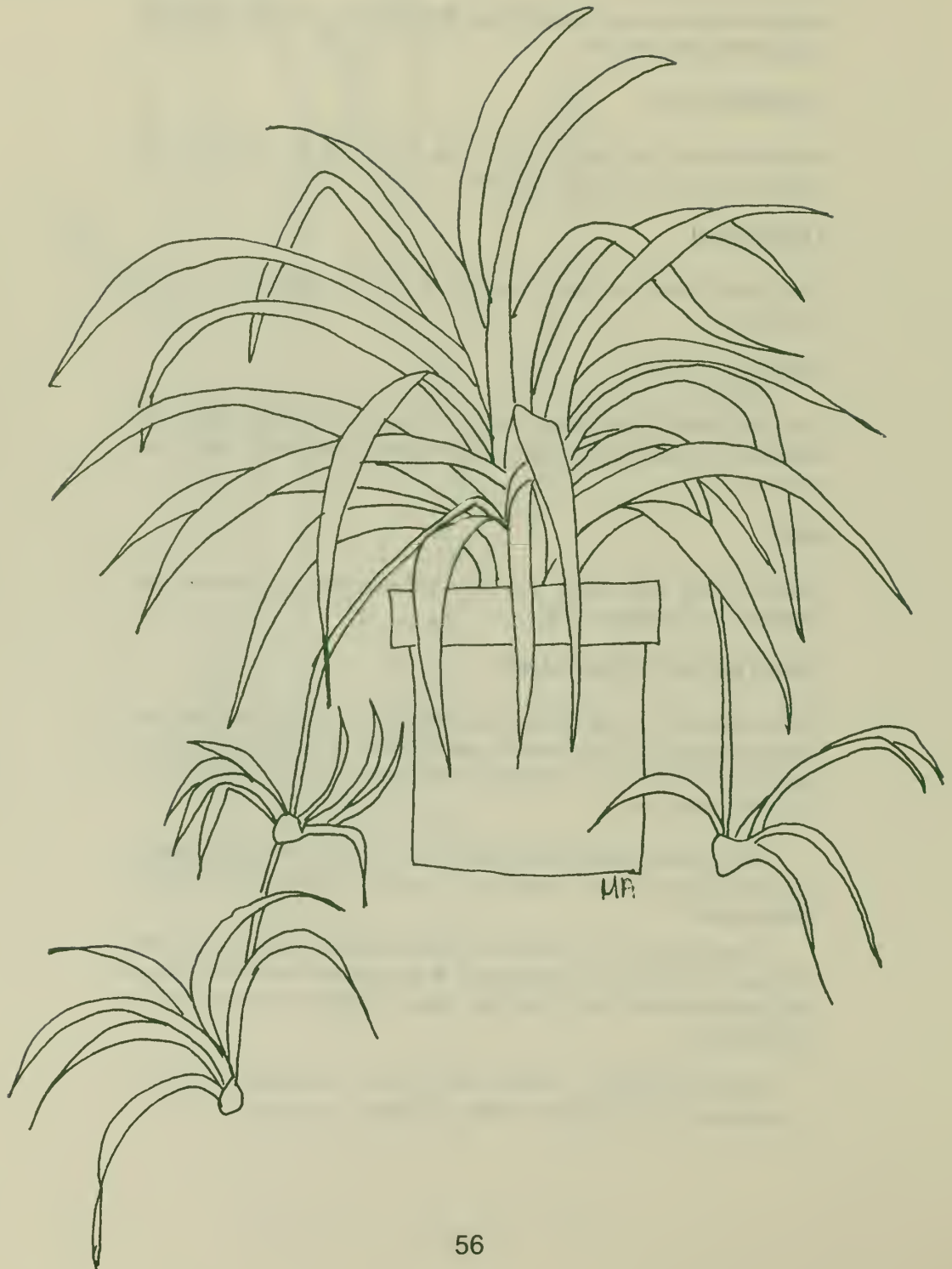
*\*Zeylonica*: distinguished by bands that vary from light green to white. Cut the leaves into two or three sections and root them in sandy soil.

*\*Laurenti*: recognizable by its yellow bands. You should divide the leaves of the plant and repot. It is possible to cut the leaves into sections and plant, but the yellow coloration would not be maintained.

*\*Hahnii*: relatively small and grow in circular clusters. Propagation is by division of the "creeping" root stock.

## SPIDER PLANT

*Chlorophytum elatum vittatum*



# **SPIDER PLANT**

With its green and white foliage, the Spider Plant makes one of the best hanging plants. The graceful trailing runners have plantlets and white star shaped flowers. There are all green varieties but the more commonly seen one has a green leaf striped with white.

## **TEMPERATURE**

The plant lives best in a warm location.

## **LIGHT#SUN**

This lovely plant does very well hanging in indirect sun or a moderately lighted area.

## **WATER#HUMIDITY**

Spider Plant should be allowed to dry out before rewatering. Drying leaf tips usually indicates lack of humidity. To tidy up the plant just snip these off.

## **SOIL**

The plant grows contentedly in a rich soil composed of garden loam, sand and peat moss.

## **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

New plantlets will appear on the ends of runners (long slender trailing stems) sent out from the parent. When the plantlets have six or seven leaves they can be cut from the parent and potted separately or rooted in water. It is easier to pin down a plantlet in a different pot and sever the runner when new growth appears.



**WANDERING JEW**  
*Zebrina pendula*





## **WANDERING JEW**

This is a particularly attractive hanging plant. It is hardy and easy to grow with only one special requirement, which is regular pinching to keep it full and bushy. There are several plants called Wandering Jew, distinguished from each other by their different colorings and markings. The illustration is a *Zebrina pendula*. The leaf, is a pointed oval with a deep purple underside, and the upperside is dark green striped with pale silvery-green. *Tradescantia fluminensis* has small oval green leaves marked with white, silver and white, or yellow.

### **TEMPERATURE**

These plants prefer warm temperatures.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

Bright indirect sun light keeps the foliage brilliant. Avoid direct sun light as they are susceptible to sun burn.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

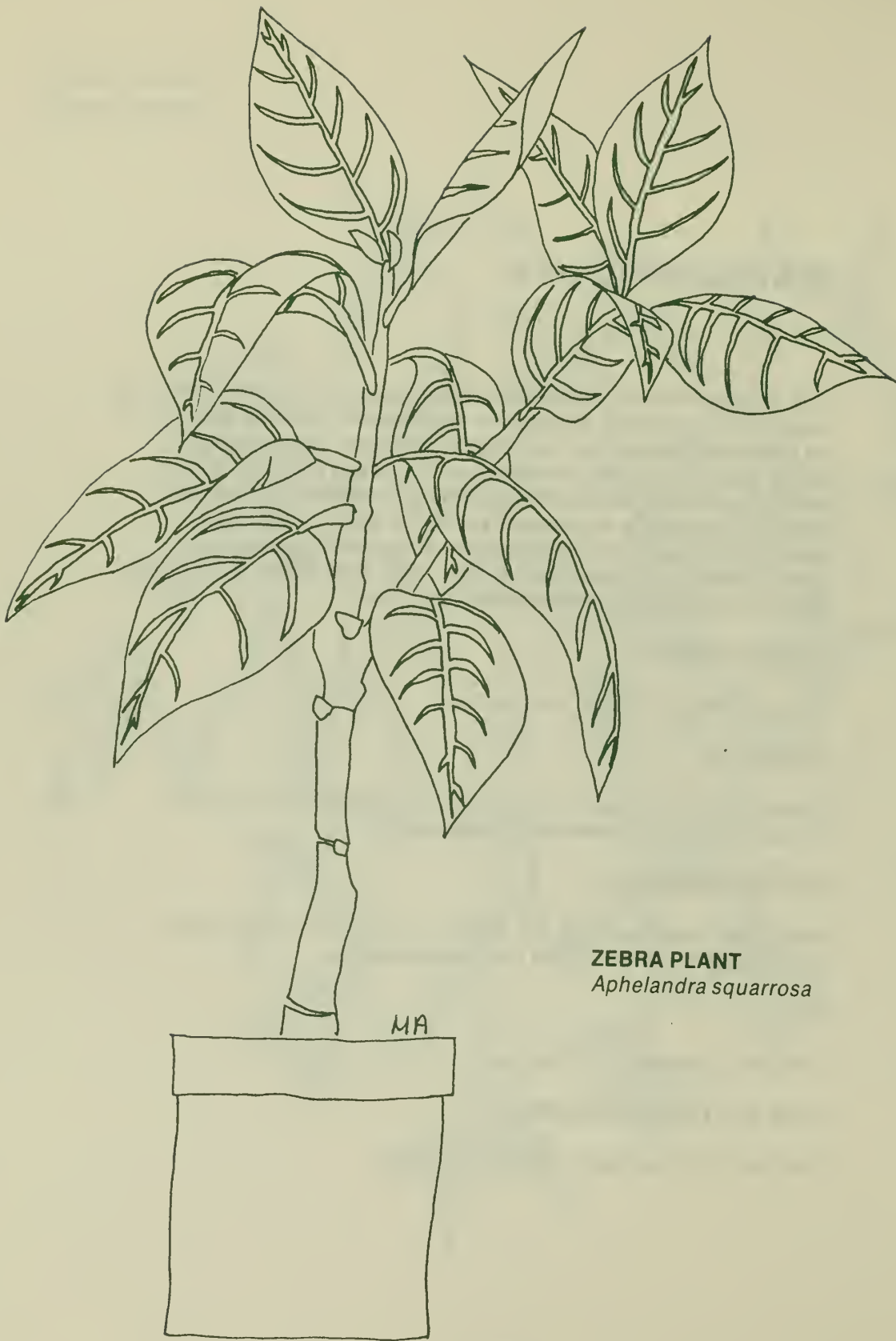
Water generously keeping the soil moist at all times. During the winter months it will not need quite as much water.

### **SOIL**

This plant grows in a well drained potting soil, or water.

### **HOW TO START NEW PLANTS**

Root four inch cuttings in moist soil or water.



**ZEBRA PLANT**  
*Aphelandra squarrosa*

## **ZEBRA PLANT**

The Zebra Plant is one of the showiest house plants one can grow. It's spike of waxy yellow flowers and deep shiny green leaves veined in white makes it a striking specimen.

### **TEMPERATURE**

The Zebra Plant needs warm temperatures free from drafts.

### **LIGHT#SUN**

This plant wants bright light but not direct sun light.

### **WATER#HUMIDITY**

It is important never to allow the soil to dry out. Set the pot in a pebble tray and mist the foliage daily.

### **SOIL**

The Zebra Plant likes loose soil consisting of one part garden loam, one part sand or perlite and two parts peat moss.

### **TROUBLES**

Crisp brown edges on the leaves are probably due to dry air or dry soil. Regular pinching keeps the Zebra Plant from becoming leggy.

**NOTES . . . .**

**The Green Scene.  
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